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TECHNOLOGY-FACILITATED GENDER- BASED VIOLENCE IN ASIA

INDONESIA

PROJECT BACKGROUND

Funded by USAID, NORC at the University of Chicago and the International Center for Research on Women (ICRW) set out to understand the trends of technology-facilitated Gender-Based Violence (GBV) in Indonesia; explore the programs and policies currently working to prevent, mitigate, and respond to this form of violence; and identify gaps and recommendations for future programming. To inform this case study, the team utilized existing literature and relied on key informant interviews with leaders of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and researchers working on the topic in Indonesia.

KEY FINDINGS

OVERVIEW

While data is limited on the prevalence of technology-facilitated GBV in Indonesia, more research in recent years has shed additional light on the current state of the issue. Technology-facilitated GBV or “online gender-based violence” (as it is locally referred to in Indonesia) has been a steadily growing phenomenon in this Southeast Asian country. Cases of such violence have continued to rise throughout the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. While the country lacks sufficient laws and reporting systems to hold perpetrators accountable and support survivors, a network of nonprofits, civil society groups, and government actors has been working to prevent, mitigate, and respond to this form of violence.

KEY TERMS AND CONCEPTS

- **Technology-facilitated gender-based violence (GBV)** is any action carried out using the internet and/or mobile technology that harms others based on their sexual or gender identity or by enforcing harmful gender norms.¹
- **Non-consensual dissemination of intimate images** refers to taking, releasing, or threatening to release intimate or private images of someone without their consent, and includes direct images as well as editing someone’s face or recognizable identity into another sexually explicit or intimate image.²
- **Cyber-homophobia** refers to online abuse or harassment based on someone’s sexual orientation.³
- **Online harassment** includes using written threats or bullying in online spaces or platforms in a persistent manner.⁴
- **Doxing** is the non-consensual release of personal or identifying information, such as an address or contact information.⁵

¹ Hinson, L., J. Mueller, L. O'Brien-Milne, and N. Wandera. "Technology-Facilitated GBV: What is it, and How do we measure it." *International Center for Research on Women*. (2018).

² SAFEnet. "Indonesian Digital Rights Situation Report – The Rise of Digital Authoritarianism." (2019). <https://safenet.or.id/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Indonesia-Digital-Right-Situation-2019.pdf>

³ Australian Human Rights Commission. "Current issues of 'Internet censorship': bullying, discrimination, harassment and freedom of expression."

<https://humanrights.gov.au/our-work/5-current-issues-internet-censorship-bullying-discrimination-harassment-and-freedom>.

⁴ SAFEnet. "Indonesian Digital Rights Situation Report - Digital Repression Amid the Pandemic." (2020). https://safenet.or.id/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/2020_Digital-Situation-Report-2020.pdf

⁵ Ibid

PREVALENCE, PERPETRATION, AND MOTIVATION

Technology-facilitated GBV is prevalent in Indonesia,⁶ with the Indonesian National Commission on Violence Against Women (Komnas Perempuan) noting it as a rising trend in its 2017 annual report.⁷ While recorded numbers continue to increase steadily, they have spiked dramatically since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. Komnas Perempuan received 940 reports in 2020, which represented a nearly 400 percent increase from 2019,⁸ while the South East Asia Freedom of Expression Network (SAFEEnet)—a digitally focused non-profit in the South Asia region—noted an increase from 60 complaint cases in 2019 to 620 in 2020.^{9,10} The rise in reporting is likely due to the proliferation of internet use during COVID-19 when people spent more time at home, as well as increased global focus on technology-facilitated GBV making reporting portals more widely known for survivors to document their cases.¹¹

Perpetration of technology-facilitated GBV often threatens both the victim's safety and their reputation. The majority of what is discussed and recognized as technology-facilitated GBV in Indonesia includes image-based abuse,¹² especially non-consensual dissemination of intimate images. This consists of taking, releasing, or threatening to release intimate or private images of someone without their consent and includes direct images as well as editing someone's face or recognizable identity into another sexually explicit or intimate image.¹³ This may also include impersonating the victim through creating a fake profile and posting content without the person's consent.¹⁴ Image-based abuse is sometimes perpetrated by a former or current partner to force the victim to continue a relationship or is perpetrated by someone with the intention to extort the victim for money, sexual favors, or additional intimate images. In 2020, image-based abuse cases represented 75 percent of reports to SAFEEnet.¹⁵ Other key forms of technology-facilitated GBV in the country include online harassment, such as written threats or bullying, and privacy violations which may include violent acts like doxing or publicly releasing private identifiable information about the victim.¹⁶

⁶ Sheany. "Cyber-Violence, an Emerging New Reality for Many Indonesian Women." (2018). <https://jakartaglobe.id/news/cyber-violence-emerging-new-reality-many-indonesian-women/>

⁷ Kamillia AL. "Preventing the Wrongful Criminalization of Online Gender-based Violence Victims: A Look into Law No. 44 of 2008 on Pornography." 2021. ISSN ONLINE: 2746 - 430X
<https://journal.ugm.ac.id/v3/pswk/article/view/2241/636>

⁸ Ibid

⁹ SAFEEnet. "Indonesian Digital Rights Situation Report 2019 – The Rise of Digital Authoritarianism." (2019).

<https://safenet.or.id/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Indonesia-Digital-Right-Situation-2019.pdf>

¹⁰ SAFEEnet. "Indonesian Digital Rights Situation Report 2020 – Digital Repression Amid the Pandemic." (2020).

https://safenet.or.id/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/2020_Digital-Situation-Report-2020.pdf

¹¹ Jatmiko MI, Syukron M, and Mekarsari Y. "Covid-19, Harassment and Social Media: A Study of Gender-Based Violence Facilitated by Technology During the Pandemic." *Journal of Society and Media*, ol. 4, no. 2 (October 2020): 319-347

<https://journal.unesa.ac.id/index.php/jsm/article/view/9892/4571>

¹² SAFEEnet. Indonesian Digital Rights Situation Report 2020 – Digital Repression Amid the Pandemic. (2020).

https://safenet.or.id/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/2020_Digital-Situation-Report-2020.pdf

¹³ SAFEEnet. Indonesian Digital Rights Situation Report 2019 – The Rise of Digital Authoritarianism. (2019).

<https://safenet.or.id/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Indonesia-Digital-Right-Situation-2019.pdf>

¹⁴ SAFEEnet. Indonesian Digital Rights Situation Report 2020 – Digital Repression Amid the Pandemic. (2020).

https://safenet.or.id/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/2020_Digital-Situation-Report-2020.pdf

¹⁵ Ibid

¹⁶ Ibid

Current reports show that women tend to be the key demographic group experiencing technology-facilitated GBV in Indonesia. SAFEnet’s 2020 data showed 76 percent of respondents identified as women, 5 percent identified as men, and 19 percent did not specify their gender. Nearly one-third of these reports were from survivors in the 21–30 age group. The report further notes the types of individuals experiencing the issue included regular citizens (20.4 percent), journalists (17 percent), and activists (17 percent).¹⁷

Minority communities are also targeted due to their identities. Those belonging to the LGBTQI+ community are not legally included as a protected group against hate crimes and discrimination due to their non-heteronormative sexuality and/or gender identity in Indonesia. These populations often turn to online spaces to find friendships, resources, and other support. Yet at the same time, they are subjected to “cyber-homophobia,” a form of online abuse and harassment based on someone’s sexual orientation. Data on technology-facilitated GBV faced by the LGBTQI+ community are severely limited due to fear of discrimination or violence, dangers that further compound the risks of reporting abuse and limits their access to support services.

In Indonesia, there are many drivers of technology-facilitated GBV and notions of what motivates perpetrators. Conservative values and strong patriarchal norms are common within Indonesia and are used to justify the violence, especially against women, girls, and the LGBTQI+ community.¹⁸ These values are strongly ingrained in the social systems, leaving many survivors wary of reporting or sharing their abuse with their families. Police and court officials further hold victim-blaming ideologies grounded in these conservative values, leading some who report to be dismissed or shamed for seeking help. These norms create a social atmosphere that allows perpetrators to act with impunity. Other aspects like low digital literacy exacerbate the issue because internet users in general have limited ability to understand how their information can be manipulated or used online or how damaging forwarding and sharing others’ information can be.

PREVENTION, MITIGATION, AND RESPONSE

There are several key organizations and initiatives currently working to prevent, mitigate, and provide support for survivors. Most notable is [SAFEnet](#), a regional advocacy organization that operates in Indonesia. This organization provides psychological counseling; promotes general awareness and advocacy around digital rights and safety; and partners with digital platforms, feminist networks, civil society, and government actors to prevent technology-facilitated GBV.¹⁹

Other non-governmental or civil society organizations dedicated to the issue include the [Purple Code Collective](#), which provides legal, technical, social, and psychological support to girls, women, and the non-binary community in order to tackle online GBV and gender misinformation.²⁰ Their main goal is to

¹⁷ Ibid

¹⁸ Muna AN, Rauf DTB, and Krismantari I. “Indonesia’s rise in domestic violence during the COVID-19 pandemic: why it happens and how to seek help.” (2020). <https://theconversation.com/indonesias-rise-in-domestic-violence-during-the-covid-19-pandemic-why-it-happens-and-how-to-seek-help-142032>

¹⁹ Available at: <https://id.safenet.or.id/>

²⁰ Available at: <https://move92.org/profiles/purple-code-collective-indonesia/>

increase awareness on the importance of feminism on the internet and assist survivors of online GBV.²¹ The [Institut Pelangi Perempuan \(IPP\)](#), which started around 2016, has a dedicated focus on digital rights for the LGBTQI+ community. Similarly, the [Legal Aid Foundation of the Indonesian Women's Association for Justice \(LBK APIK\)](#) helps to provide legal support to women facing GBV and has included cases of technology-facilitated GBV in its focus.

Several government initiatives exist to bring attention to online GBV, such as the [Komnas Perempuan](#), which has been researching and reporting on technology-facilitated GBV annually since 2017.²² The Ministries of Women Empowerment and Child Protection, Communication and Informatics, and Law and Human Rights have provided logistical and financial support on this issue.

Indonesia relies on the efforts of international organizations, such as the Association of Progressive Communications (APC), the United Nations, and Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, to supplement civil society, government, and grassroots efforts in the form of digital security training and direct funding. Indonesia is also an active member in several key international organizations, such as [ECPAT](#), which focuses on online sexual exploitation of children.

There are few laws and policies that protect victims against technology-facilitated GBV in Indonesia. In fact, legislation such as the anti-pornography and the Electronic Information and Transaction (UU ITE) laws have been used to prosecute victims of technology-facilitated GBV²³ and/or to accommodate alleged offenders by giving them means to report victims for defamation.²⁴ For example, the anti-pornography law does not value consent and is therefore used by law enforcement officials to criminalize survivors as participating in pornography rather than being victims of non-consensual dissemination of intimate images.²⁵ Further, the UU ITE law does not specify additional protection to children who face technology-facilitated GBV and must be combined with other child protection laws to increase support for this vulnerable population.²⁶

GAPS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Much of the success to date in the effort to prevent, mitigate, and respond to technology-facilitated GBV is due to intentional collaboration between various civil society, governmental, and activist actors. Areas for consideration to bolster programming efforts include:

- **Strengthen legal protection mechanisms:** The lack of legal protection is a major barrier to addressing technology-facilitated GBV in Indonesia. Laws must be reformed using feminist and

²¹ Wicaksana P. "PurpleCode Collective emphasizes importance of Feminism presence on internet." (2021). <http://news.unair.ac.id/en/2021/03/10/purplecode-collective-emphasizes-importance-of-feminism-presence-on-internet/>
²² Florence U. "Indonesian women fight uphill battle against online harassment." Tech in Culture. (2021). <https://kr-asia.com/indonesian-women-fight-uphill-battle-against-online-harassment-tech-in-culture>

²³ Experts at ICJ webinar say Indonesia needs to do more to combat discrimination against women. (2021). <https://www.icj.org/experts-at-icj-webinar-say-indonesia-needs-to-do-more-to-combat-discrimination-against-women/>

²⁴ Florence U. Indonesian women fight uphill battle against online harassment | Tech in Culture. 2021. <https://kr-asia.com/indonesian-women-fight-uphill-battle-against-online-harassment-tech-in-culture>

²⁵ Kamillia AL. "Preventing the Wrongful Criminalization of Online Gender-based Violence Victims: A Look into Law No. 44 of 2008 on Pornography." 2021. <https://journal.ugm.ac.id/v3/pswk/article/view/2241/636>

²⁶ Arsawati, I., Darma, I. and Antari, P. "A Criminological Outlook of Cyber Crimes in Sexual Violence against Children in Indonesian Laws." *International Journal of Criminology and Sociology*, Vol. 10 (2021): 219–23. <https://doi.org/10.6000/1929-4409.2021.10.26>.

inclusive principals to focus on consent and eliminate victim blaming policies. Some actors within the Indonesian government and members of civil society and grassroots movements are currently attempting to amend laws such as the anti-pornography and the UU ITE to be more supportive of survivors' rights.²⁷ Efforts to pass the Sexual Violence Bill (RUU PKS), a bill that addresses many failings of previous legislation and is a comprehensive criminal justice response, should continue despite major setbacks (e.g. the reduction from nine to five forms of acknowledged sexual violence)^{28,29,30} and controversial views, such as conservative parties' concerns related to legalizing LGBTQI+ behavior. Greater support by international actors to local grassroots movements attempting to address these laws can further facilitate change.

- **Enhance efforts to address inequitable gender and social norms:** Conservative values and a dominant patriarchal perspective within society challenge efforts to address technology-facilitated GBV and foster a culture of victim-blaming by family, friends, and others who interact with victims, such as law enforcement officials. Violence remains highly stigmatized, resulting in a lack of prioritization of the issue within government and society, rendering many efforts within and outside government relatively futile. Efforts that address underlying gender norms can help to disrupt harmful perceptions of women, girls, and the LGBTQI+ community, ultimately reducing them as targets and destigmatizing their experiences seeking support when issues arise. These efforts should include society at large, as well as targeted programming for police and court officials handling cases of technology-facilitated GBV and interacting directly with survivors.
- **Improve digital literacy and safety:** Low literacy, including digital literacy, is a concerning issue in the country. For example, internet users tend to rapidly distribute non-consensual intimate images without understanding the implications, further stigmatizing and causing harm to victims. Although some efforts already exist, such as SAFEnet's guidebook on non-consensual distribution of intimate images,³¹ programs that use a rights-based perspective need to be expanded to develop and deploy better guidelines for engaging safely on the internet. Digital literacy training should also include basic safety and awareness for all internet users on how their information may be used (or misused) and where they can go to report offenses.
- **Increase survivor-centric resources and support:** Comprehensive and sufficient resources, such as access to legal support and therapy services, are essential for survivors. The rise in cases reported during COVID-19 overwhelmed the already limited and saturated resources available in Indonesia. Funding for these resources is seen as a formidable challenge, with some organizations relying only on grants coming from the international community rather

²⁷ Experts at ICJ webinar say Indonesia needs to do more to combat discrimination against women. (2021).

<https://www.icj.org/experts-at-icj-webinar-say-indonesia-needs-to-do-more-to-combat-discrimination-against-women/>

²⁸ Hollaback! Jakarta working to end harassment against women. (2020).

https://www.unaids.org/en/resources/presscentre/featurestories/2020/march/20200303_hollaback

²⁹ Gerlach R. The fight to outlaw sexual violence in Indonesia. (2020).

<https://www.insideindonesia.org/the-fight-to-outlaw-sexual-violence-in-indonesia>

³⁰ Davies S., Wolter A., and Oetomo D. Questioning Intent: The Indonesian Government Is Not Committed to Eliminating Sexual Violence. (2021). <https://gija.georgetown.edu/2021/11/11/questioning-intent-the-indonesian-government-is-not-committed-to-eliminating-sexual-violence/>

³¹ Available at: <https://awaskbgo.id/ncii>

than the government. Additional funding from the national government and international donors can enhance survivor-centric resources and efforts.

- **Invest in accessible user experience models to ensure better privacy and reporting:** Technology-facilitated GBV is increasing yet, reporting remains difficult for survivors and under-prioritized by digital platforms, which have largely shifted their attention and resources to addressing COVID-19–related misinformation. The user experience of privacy settings and reporting mechanisms can be challenging to navigate, especially when someone has low digital literacy. Tech companies further struggle to incorporate the issue of consent when developing privacy and reporting mechanisms, making it difficult to report a violation of consent such as screenshotting and sharing a conversation without permission. Region- and country-specific research on survivor-centric experiences of reporting could encourage tech companies to recognize these needs and invest in programming that is responsive to survivors. International actors and local governments can work in collaboration with tech companies to facilitate this change.

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